

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

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a joint family speaking Kodagi while another speaks Kannada. 574
 Until recently Coorgs living south of Mercara had a prejudice against marrying those living in the north. The latter were regarded as inferior and derisively referred to as those living 'beyond the hills' (*boṭṭat mēlē*), the implication being that Coorgs south of Mercara were the best Coorgs. [186]

Coorgs formed a compact unit in relation to other castes. They possessed wealth and power, they liked dancing, competitive games involving the exercise of skill and strength, hunting, and soldiering. In the Vēdic or classical caste system these virtues are attributed to Kshatriyas, the caste of warriors and kings, who are next only to the Brahmin in the hierarchy. The resemblances between Coorgs and the Vēdic Kshatriyas are striking indeed in the matter of values, and it is understandable that Coorgs should regard themselves as Kshatriyas. But the classical Kshatriyas, as one of the three 'twice-born' castes, were entitled to perform certain rituals at which sacred verses (*mantras*) from the Vēdas were recited by the priests. Coorgs do not perform any of these rituals and Vēdic *mantras* are not recited when a Coorg is given a name, or marries, or dies. [796]

Coorgs, like other Caste Hindus, object very strongly to the eating of beef, and the strength of their objection was early recognized by the British who banned all slaughter of cattle for the table in Coorg in 1835. But the Coorg dietary includes pork and liquor, and this is occasionally singled out for comment by the other castes. The correlation between status and dietary is particularly strong in the interior of south India, and the Coorg claim to be considered as Kshatriyas comes up against this fact. Coorgs rightly point out that the Rajputs of north India eat pork and that this has not prevented them from being generally regarded as Kshatriyas. However, Rajputs eat only the wild pig and not the domesticated one. 262 557

In the Sanskritic myth (*Kāvēri Purāṇa* or *Kāvēri Māhātmya*) about the River Kāvēri, Coorgs are said to be Ugras,¹ or the descendants of the marriage of a Kshatriya prince and his Shūdra wife. The Kāvēri Myth thus cleverly reconciles the economic and 773 ●

¹ Ugra means 'strong, formidable, terrible, violent, angry, passionate, cruel, fierce, pungent, hot, high and noble. It is also the name of a mixed tribe, descended from a Kshatriya father and Shudra mother, and of Malabar.' M. Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, Oxford, 1899, p. 172.

- 723 military power of Coorgs with their lack of certain rituals and their somewhat catholic dietary. It is interesting to note that Shri N. Chinnappa considers the account of the origin of Coorgs given in the Kāvēri Myth to be a true, historical account. He, however, mentions that the majority of Coorgs regard themselves as Kshatriyas and not as Ugras.¹

544 Coorgs seem to be a distinct community in occupation of the forested mountains of Coorg for many centuries, and with a way of life of their own. But they were throughout in contact with [17] Sanskritic Hinduism, and religious movements like Lingāyatism affected them considerably.

[62] There are two subdivisions among Coorgs today: the first division is 41,026 strong, while the second contains only 666 individuals, according to the 1941 Census. Members of the latter division are called Amma Koḍagas, or Amma Coorgs, and they are highly Brahminized in their customs and ritual. They are vegetarians and teetotallers, and nowadays they constitute an endogamous unit. Like the Brahmins they wear the sacred thread and observe [291] [769] annual *shrāddhas* or ancestor-feasts at which only vegetarian food is offered to the dead ancestors.

564 It is said that Amma Coorgs are the descendants of a Coorg man and a Brahmin girl of Wynād, daughter of one Tāyikāṭ Tambiran, 173 who expelled his daughter from his home as she attained puberty 551 before marriage. (Formerly, among Brahmins, it was regarded as both sinful and shameful to have in the house an unmarried girl who had attained puberty.) This girl married a Coorg, and her descendants came to be known as Amma Coorgs (*amma* = mother), and they observed the customs of their mother. The name of an [104] Amma Coorg man has the suffix '*amma*' even though '*amma*' means 'mother', and is normally a suffix to a woman's name in certain parts of south India. In Coorg, a woman's name has the suffix '*avva*' which is the same as '*amma*', and a man's name has the suffix '*appa*' which means 'father'. It is said that formerly Amma Coorgs, who were concentrated in south Coorg, used to claim kinship with a similar group of people in Wynād.

564 In the last few years of the reign of the last Rāja of Coorg, Amma 173 Coorgs claimed to be 'Kāvēri Brahmins', the descendants of the Brahmin disciples of the sage Agastya, husband of Kāvēri, before the latter flowed away as a river. The disciples twitted the master

¹ *Paṭṭolē Paṭumē*, pp. 19-20.

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793 swords before it while it is being carried in state, while the
796 women carry the sacred dish-lamp and the *pōliya* box.¹ Again,
each festival-priest may be required to provide a certain votive
offering like *kuduré* ('horse'), *chūlé* ('prostitute'), *ettu pōraṣa*
(bullock loaded with rice), and so on. The oracles (*tiruvāḷa*) also
run traditionally in certain *okkas*.

796 The entire work of the festival is distributed among the various
624 high-caste *okkas* in the village. (The *Mēdas* and *Poleyas*, though
they may have important roles, are nowhere festival-priests.) The
work is divided meticulously: for instance, at the *Kētrappa*
festival, a man belonging to one *okka* carries *Kētrappa*'s image up to
the temple compound and then hands it over to another belonging
to a different *okka* who carries it for about 12 feet and places it on a
bench. Division of festival labour is thorough and minute, and
formerly a duty was looked upon as a privilege.

796 According to the song sung at the festival of *Kētrappa*, the *okkas*
773 which are festival-priests today all formed part of the original
caravan which went to Malabar and brought the deity to *Bēngūr*.
Incidents which form part of the festival are 'explained' by refer-
ence to this caravan: for instance, the *Kētrappa* image is brought
from its normal resting-place which is the *Taṭṭaṇḍa* house on the
seventeenth day of the festival and deposited in the *Aréyanḍa* house
for three days, after which it is taken back to the *Taṭṭaṇḍa* house.
This is explained in the song by reference to the fact that the deity
stayed in the *Aréyanḍa* house while a temple was built for him
when he first came to *Bēngūr*. The important fact for us is that
the song refers to this incident. The song provides a charter and an
explanation of the incidents taking place in the festival.

IV

796 The festival of *Kundat Bhadrakālī* of *Kuklūr*, near *Vīrarājpēṭ* in
624 south Coorg, now briefly described, may be regarded as typical
of the festivals of village-deities. These festivals last for several
days, involve very elaborate and complicated ritual, and imply the
co-operation of several castes, and frequently of two or three
villages.

¹ The *pōliya* box is a box of plaited cane, containing an odd number of meas-
ures of rice, odd number of coconuts, plantains, jaggery cubes, and betel leaves
and areca-nut. It is carried by a married woman on auspicious occasions such
as marriage

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634 When the fortunes of a *nāḍ* were at a low ebb, the elders of that
[288] *nāḍ* went on a pilgrimage to the patron-deity of the *nāḍ* and prayed
to him for the birth of a hero in their midst.

- [723] Legends grew up about a hero. Chegeṭṭira Appanna is supposed
to have accomplished everything he did before he was sixteen days
old. The hero had power to curse. After he died, he became a
powerful spirit, a *ḍira*.

The boundary of a *nāḍ* obtains importance on some ritual occasions. A groom passing in state through a *nāḍ* to the bride's village is given the 'plantain honour' at the boundary of the *nāḍ*.

634 Richter describes a custom which brings out the ritual impor-
164 tance of the *nāḍ*-boundary:

782 In cases of sore afflictions befalling a whole village or *nāḍ* such as small-pox, cholera, cattle-disease, the ryots [peasants] combine to appease the wrath of Māriamma [the goddess Māri who presides over these epidemics] by collecting contributions of pigs, rice, coconuts, bread and plantains, from the different houses and depositing them at the *mandu* [green]; whence they are carried in a procession with tom-toms. In one basket there is some rice, and the members of each house on coming out bring a little rice in the hand, waving it round the head, throw it into the basket, with the belief that the dreaded evil will depart with the rice. At last the offerings are put down on the *nāḍ*-boundary, the animals are killed, their blood is offered on a stone, the rice and basket are left, and the rest of the provisions consumed by those composing the procession. The people of adjoining villages and *nāḍ*s repeat the ceremony, and thus the epidemic is supposed to be banished from the country. In still greater calamities, a flock of sheep is driven from *nāḍ* to *nāḍ* and, at last, expelled from the country.¹

X

- [594] There is no social unit among Coorgs which is without a head.
 - 622 Every *okka* has a headman and the headman's wife is the head of
 - [431] the women in the *okka*. A temple has a headman with a number of
 - 829 officials under him. A village has a village-headman, and above the village is the *nāḍ*, and every *nāḍ* has at least one *nāḍ*-headman, and frequently more than one. The highest category of headmen are,
 - [434] however, the headmen of *stnē* or *dēsha*, of whom there are eight in all.
- Coorgs have a keen sense of discipline, which is associated in

¹ *Manual of Coorg*, p. 170.

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769 It is important to remember that Sārtāvu is Ayyappa, the son
 776 of Shiva and Vishṇu in the form of Mōhini. The lawless spirit
 of a magician-cum-fighter is tamed by making it subordinate to a
 deity who has been completely Sanskritized.

XII

182 The hierarchical idea inherent in caste expresses itself in a
 584 variety of ways at the festival of a village-deity. For instance, at
 782 the Kētrappa festival in Bēngūr, the fowls brought as offerings to
 the deity by members of the higher castes are decapitated by a
 Coorg, and the pigs brought by them, by a Paṇika. But neither the
 Coorg nor the Paṇika decapitates the animals brought by the
 lower castes like the Mēḍa and Poleyā. The animals brought by
 the latter are decapitated by a Mēḍa.

Usually, the man who sacrifices the animal gets its head as his
 perquisite. The animal is then divided into two halves, one half
 going to the owner and the other to the village. Each *okka* in the
 village gets a share in the half which goes to the village. But the
 animals offered by Mēḍas and Poleyas are not divided in this
 manner, nor do they get a share in the animals brought by the
 higher castes. That is to say, in this context, the village does not
 include the Mēḍa and Poleyā. Nor does it include the Brahmin who
 does not sacrifice animals to deities.

182 The deities Kākkōṭ Achchayya, and Akkavva, according to the
 584 folksong, leave Malabar to seek shelter in Coorg. After crossing
 ● 773 into Coorg they meet a Poleyā deity, Kāryappa, whom they take as
 their servant. The three deities then go to Kākkōṭ village where they
 see some children playing. Kākkōṭ Achchayya and Akkavva
 possess Coorg children, whereas Kāryappa possesses a Poleyā boy.
 In this instance, the caste-idiom is completely projected into
 mythology and religion.

776 The deities Kētrappa (m.) and Koḍli Povvedi (f.) are both
 182 recipients of offerings of non-vegetarian dishes and liquor. Coorgs
 explain this by saying that both the deities lost their caste on
 coming into Coorg. In fact there is an incident in the Kētrappa
 song giving an account of the change in the dietetic habits of the
 deity: while returning to Bēngūr from Malabar, Kallumāḍa
 Ayyappa, who was possessed by Kētrappa, put everyone to sleep
 while he climbed a *bainé* (*caryota urens*) tree and drank toddy from

778 custom exists everywhere in south India among Hindus. Water
171 is identified with the holy Ganges, and such an identification teaches
a Hindu to regard the Ganges as a deity. It opens a window on
Sanskritic Hinduism.

- 773 On the way to Tala Kāvēri from Bhāgamandla there is an
778 immense boulder called 'Bhīma's pebble'. It is said that Bhīma,
one of the Pāṇḍava brothers, found a tiny 'pebble' in his dinner
which he picked up and threw away. What was a tiny pebble to
Bhīma is an immense boulder to ordinary human beings. Bhīma's
strength was prodigious, and his strength, enormous appetite, and
chivalry have made him the most lovable of the five Pāṇḍava
brothers, the heroes of the epic, Mahābhārata. 'Bhīma's pebble'
makes the epic more immediate to Coorgs and other Hindus in
Coorg.

The mountain in which the Kāvēri rises is called Brahmagiri,
and it is said that the god Brahma has settled down on top of the
mountain. Brahma was in two minds as to whether he should
settle down on top of the Brahmagiri mountain or a neighbouring
one, and he finally decided on the former as it was higher than the
latter by a rice grain.

- 778 While ideally the Kāvēri is sacred to every Hindu, actually it is
788 mostly Hindus from various parts of south India, especially
171 Mysore, Malabar, and the Tamil country who go on pilgrimage to
the river-source on the first of Libra. Similarly the shrine of
Subramanya is sacred to every Hindu, though actually only Hindus
from the Kannaḍa- and Tulu-speaking areas visit it. But there are
centres of pilgrimage such as the Temple of Venkātāchala at Tirupati
in the Telugu country visited by Hindus from practically every
part of south India. The temples of Minākshi at Madura and
Rāmēshwara at Rāmēshwaram in south-east India are visited by
Hindu pilgrims from every part of India. In continental India, too,
there are several places of pilgrimage for Hindus from every part of
India.

- 778 Deities too have varying 'spreads' even though ideally they are
171 sacred to all Hindus. In fact, over a period of time 'spread' shows
a dynamic quality: a deity who commanded the devotion of a king
enlarged his 'spread' to include the territory ruled by the king.

- 171 Peninsular India is an area of enormous cultural diversity, but it
forms a loose unity viewed in relation to continental India, just as
India itself exhibits some unity when viewed in relation to the rest

of the world. Certain ritual and cultural forms are found widespread, 77 over peninsular India: the *tālī* or marriage badge tied by the groom to the bride is found everywhere except among Coorgs. A married woman wears a vermilion mark on her forehead, and only she is 302 entitled to a necklace of tiny black beads and black bangles and to wear flowers in her hair. The cult of the village-deities too is 776 broadly similar.¹

Coorg Proper forms a 'Region' along with Malabar and South 101 Canara. The three areas mentioned have many similar rites, beliefs, 779 customs, and habits. But within this 'Region', Coorg Proper seems to have more in common with Malabar than with South Canara. The ritual forms which Coorg shares with Malabar and South Canara, and the deities worshipped by them, usually come under Regional Hinduism, while the ritual forms and deities shared in common with Kannaḍigas and Tamilians usually come under Peninsular Hinduism.

Local Hinduism has a more restricted 'spread' than Regional 779 Hinduism. The people of a village or *nāḍ* share a great many ritual 184 and cultural forms in common, though membership of a caste frequently cuts across these alinements in the case of the top and immigrant castes. Castes like the Baṇṇa, Paṇṇika, and Kaniya share certain ritual and cultural forms with not only their counterparts in Malabar but with all Malayāḷis. Similarly with castes like the Poleyas and Mēḍas who are immigrants from the Kannaḍa country. The length of the period of residence of an immigrant caste, and its position in the caste system, are factors which influence the extent to which it has preserved its traditional culture.

The River Kāvēri is a manifestation of Pārvati, the wife of Shiva, 773 and the devout refer to it as Mother Kāvēri in certain contexts. 776 Coorgs regard the Kāvēri as their patron goddess: the Kāvēri Myth associates the river specially with Coorgs. Coorg women 291 pleat their saris at the back instead of in the front as in the rest of India, and this feature of their dress is attributed in the Myth to the force of the floods which pushed the pleats of the assembled Coorg women to the back. This happened when Pārvati first assumed the form of a river, and Coorgs, men and women, were waiting for their patron goddess to appear at Balmuri, a few miles from the source.

Regional Hinduism often contains some Sanskritic elements, in 779 which case it directly stresses Regional ties and, indirectly, All-India 171

consisting of innumerable groups, each of which has a certain amount of cultural and ritual autonomy, then it is realized that any attempt to fit them into a hierarchy results in disputes as to relative status. When it is further remembered that the caste system includes sects which began originally by rejecting the idea of hierarchy, but which subsequently became castes, it is seen that disputes as to relative status are inevitable.

In south India disputes as to relative status are a feature specially of castes of the middle region. The Brahmins and Untouchables are known to belong to either extreme, though even here the presence of some subdivisions of Brahmins who are said to be inferior to practically every other caste complicates matters. The group claiming to be Kshatriya might be a local peasant or artisan caste which has acquired political power. Sometimes it might even be an outlying group or tribe. This gives rise to disputes. There are always people who point out that a particular ruling family which has been governing a certain part of India for several centuries are not Kshatriyas but belong to a low caste. Similarly the claims of local trading castes to be called Vaishyas are frequently questioned by others.

The fivefold system does not do justice to the complexity of the caste system as it exists, but it makes intelligible the castes of various parts of India by reference to an All-India framework.

Coorgs are a handsome, well-to-do, and powerful people with a martial tradition behind them, and it is quite natural for them to claim to be Kshatriyas. It may be recalled here that members of rich and influential Coorg *okkas* occasionally married relatives of the Lingāyaṭ Rājas. The Lingāyaṭs of the Kannaḍa country occupy a high position in the caste hierarchy, and they are also very strict vegetarians and teetotallers. The fact that relatives of the Rājās married Coorgs over 130 years ago is testimony to the high position of Coorgs in the caste hierarchy and to their physical and mental qualities.

The Kāvēri Myth makes out Coorgs to be Ugras, the offspring of a Kshatriya prince and his Shūdra wife. Certain sins committed by the prince in a previous existence prevented him from having children by a wife of his own caste, and he had to take a Shūdra wife for children to continue his line.

Why does the Kāvēri Myth make out Coorgs to be Ugras and not Kshatriyas? It is probably due to the fact that the Brahminical

584 authors of the Myth saw an inconsistency between Coorg dietary,
 773 plus their failure to resort to Vēdic ritual on certain occasions of life, and their high economic position and the profession of arms. The last two factors favoured their being considered Kshatriyas, while the first two factors did not. The situation was resolved ingeniously by their being considered the descendants of an inter-caste marriage.

584 Educated Coorgs are, however, certain that they are Kshatriyas.
 186 In 1902, Shri K. Appayya, a Coorg doctor in the employment of the Mysore Palace, wrote a book on Coorg customs in Kannaḍa, entitled *Koḍagara Kulāchārādi Tatvōjjivini*, and in this book he tried to derive every Coorg custom from the customs of the Vēdic Kshatriyas. This tendency is a common one: educated Coorgs regard themselves as Indo-Aryans, descendants of the original Indo-Aryan immigrants into India.

IV

773 Sanskrit Hinduism has a vast mythology. There are the *itihāsas*
 773 which consist of the epics, Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata. There are
 177 also the *purāṇas* which 'celebrate the powers and works of positive gods and represent a later and more extravagant form of Hinduism, of which they are in fact the Scriptures. The *purāṇas* are 18 in number, and in addition to these there are 18 *upā-purāṇas* or subordinate works . . . None of them is devoted exclusively to one god, but Viṣṇu and his incarnations fill the largest space.'¹

The *purāṇas* are religious stories in which figure deities, and many semi-divine characters, and the public reading of the *purāṇas* and epics is even now popular. The *purāṇas* have played a great part in the spread of Hinduism as ordinary people became familiar with deities and ideas of Sanskrit Hinduism through them. Even more important is the fact that the *purāṇas* facilitated the absorption of local myths and legends. (The Kāvēri Myth is part of the Skānda Purāṇa.) The *purāṇas* have been continually expanding, absorbing local myths and legends, and also weaving myths round great historical figures and events. Another importance of the *purāṇas* is that they bring purely local myths into the main stream and thus charge them with All-India significance. Thus, through the *purāṇas*, a local community becomes acquainted with

¹ J. Dowson, *Hindu Classical Dictionary*. Kegan Paul, 1914, pp. 255-7.

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the mythology of All-India Hinduism, and also its myths and legends are Sanskritized and made the property of Hindus all over India. Thus the Kāvēri Purāṇa becomes a part of the mythology of All-India Hinduism.

The epics, Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābārata, too, play an important part in the spread of Hinduism. The existence of 'Bhīma's pebble' near the source of Kāvēri has been mentioned earlier. The Lakshmanatīrtha river which rises in the plateau of Brahmagiri in the extreme south of the province is named after Lakshmaṇa, brother of the hero of the older epic, Rāmāyaṇa. It is said that Rāma and Lakshmaṇa passed through Coorg in the course of their wanderings. Lakshmaṇa, the younger brother, whose obedience to Rāma is proverbial, and who is held up as a model for all younger brothers, disobeyed Rāma as soon as he (Lakshmaṇa) left Coorg and entered Malabar. He realized the enormity of his sin when he returned to Coorg and tried to atone for it by jumping into a fire which he made by shooting an arrow against the foot of the Irpu rocks. Rāma at once created a river to save his brother. This river he called Lakshmanatīrtha and it joins the Kāvēri in Mysore State. Rāma established a *linga* (symbol of Shiva or Ishwara) at the spot where Lakshmaṇa tried to commit suicide. The temple built there is called the Rāmēshwara temple (Ishwara established by Rāma), and it is probable that this temple is an imitation of the famous temple of Rāmēshwara, in the extreme south-eastern corner of India. Coorgs and others go on pilgrimage to the temple at Irpu during Shivārātri, an All-India festival in honour of Shiva.

Mountains, rivers, lakes, and trees become associated with characters and incidents in the epics and *purāṇas*. Such local myths are found in every part of India: Rāma built a temple here, Sita bathed in this river near that rock, Shiva and Pārvati live in Kailāsa in the Himālayas, Agastya the sage meditated on top of that mountain, and so on. One's country becomes the home of one's gods. Patriotism acquires a religious quality.

Certain restrictions observed by Coorgs in common with other Hindus serve to mark them off from members of other religions. Occasionally these restrictions refer to certain incidents and characters in popular Hindu mythology. For instance, Coorg children are told to wash their feet and hands thoroughly before coming into the house from the street. The story of King Nalā is told them as a warning: Nalā one day left an unwashed spot on his

- 7B ankle and this enabled Saturn to possess him. Subsequently Nāḷa
 784 lost his throne, was separated from his beloved wife, became
 177 deformed owing to serpent-bite, and finally ended up as cook to a
 king.

It is said in Coorg that Saturn jumped on Nāḷa while the latter was standing under a *tāṇḍi* tree. Coorgs usually utter Nāḷa's name when they have to pass under a *tāṇḍi* tree, and this is said to have the effect of warding off Saturn.

The above restrictions make the story of Nāḷa, which is known to all Hindus, more immediate to Coorgs. The observance of common restrictions frequently marks off one community from another. Such observance can become a symbol of the community's solidarity and identity.

- 778 Coorgs, like other Hindus, regard the cow as sacred, and are
 171 opposed to killing it. They also abstain from eating beef. The cow
 [262] has recently figured prominently in Hindu-Muslim relations and has come to be a symbol for Hindu solidarity and identity. Orthodox Hindu opinion regards the killing of cattle with abhorrence, even though the refusal to kill the vast number of useless cattle which exist in India today is detrimental to the economy of the nation.

Reverence for the cow unites Coorgs with other Hindus. It marks both off from other communities living in India.

- 779 Certain Sanskritic theological ideas have profoundly affected
 775 the lives of Coorgs. Ideas about *karma* and *dharma* are widespread
 177 among Coorgs, not only amongst the educated but also amongst the uneducated peasantry. The Coorg funeral song abounds in Sanskritic theological ideas: a man dies 'when the ration of rice kept for him by God Nārāyaṇa is finished'. After death, a bad man goes to hell (*naraka*) and a good man to heaven (*swarga*). A man is continually reborn till he attains salvation (*mōksha*). The surviving relatives pray that the dead man may not be reborn either as man or beast, because being implies suffering. They pray that he may go to heaven and not return to earth any more.

V

- 776 Sanskritic Hinduism has a plasticity which enables it to absorb
 177 local religious phenomena. Sanskritic deities frequently undergo changes in the process of being localized. An example will make

243 On New Year's Day a clod of ploughed earth is brought home
788 and deposited in the granary. When a man sees paddy in the ear for the first time, he goes home, stands before the granary, and says, 'I saw paddy in the ear, I saw paddy in the ear, do not be startled, do not be astonished, O granary.' He tells the granary that there is going to be a bumper harvest, a harvest that will burst the granary. At the Kāvēri festival, pilgrims carry home a handful of rice from the granary (called '*akshaya pātra*', the mythical vessel of increase) in the Bhaganḍēshwara temple. This rice is put into the domestic granary to ensure a bumper harvest.

Rice is essential to the Coorg's survival, and formerly it was also the chief source of wealth. Its cultivation is the most important activity in which the *okka*, the nuclear unit of Coorg society, is engaged, and the axis round which revolve other activities. A long drought as well as excess of rain is likely to ruin the crop. Rain is a friend only if it comes when wanted and keeps away when not wanted. Proper rains in sufficient quantities mean a good crop, and abundance of rice means food, wealth, and the ability to make sacrifices to ancestors and festivals in honour of deities. It gives one the means with which one can get one's sons and daughters married, to keep one's servants, to give the feasts which have to be given, and to perform other obligations. It is because of its enormous social importance that rice, and everything associated with it in any way, receives ritual attention.

II

538 In Coorg folklore, Malabar is referred to as the 'land of ignorance' (186 *ajnāna bhūmī*), and this is presumably due to certain matrilineal castes living there. All the patrilineal peoples of south India seem to have regarded matriliney as a very odd custom. The people of the Kannāḍa and Tamil countries occasionally refer to Malabar as '*stri malayāḷa*', which means 'Malabar which is dominated by women'. There are myths which try to account for the oddness of Malabar: according to a myth which is widespread over the whole of south India, the entire Malabar coast was created by Parashurāma, the great Brahmin enemy of Kshatriyas till he was finally defeated by the Kshatriya prince, Rāma, the hero of Rāmāyaṇa, and an *avatār* of Viṣṇu. The folktale on p. 221, which gives an account of a solitary act of disobedience on the part of Laksh-

538. The *Kāvēri Māhātmya* brings the River Kāvēri and its worship into
 778 the main stream of the *purāṇas* which have an All-India spread. It also
 makes Sanskrit deities and ideas familiar to the inhabitants of Coorg. A
 special and intimate relation is established between Coorg, Coorgs, and
 the river as a result of it. A distinctive feature of the dress of Coorg
 women is associated with the Kāvēri. Coorgs regard the Kāvēri as their
 [551] patron goddess. At least one in ten girls is named Kāvēri.

● 773 The account of the origin of Coorgs in the *Kāvēri Māhātmya* is an
 attempt to reconcile certain facts which are not easy to reconcile. While
 it is true that Coorgs are a wealthy and powerful group with a martial
 outlook, they do not perform certain Vedic rituals which are performed
 by Kshatriyas elsewhere in India, and their dietary includes domestic
 pork and liquor. The myth finds a way out of the difficulties by suggest-
 ing that they are Ugras, the descendants of a Kshatriya father and
 Shūdra mother.

from Kóte-betta drain the whole northern plateau of Coorg and add an immense bulk of water to the Kávéri. Almost every one of these mountain streams forms in its descent over rocky beds cascades of great beauty. One near Mercara, the Jessa-fall (so called in honor of a daughter of the first chaplain of Mercara) is much admired and frequently visited by picnic parties. Some of the coffee estates along the Sampíji valley are notable for pleasing cataracts.

The rivers of Coorg which fall into the Kávéri beyond the province are Hémavati (*héma Sans.* gold) and the Lakshmanatirtha. The former rises near the Bhadrá river, south of Westára in the Kádúr district of Mysore, and after passing Marjarábad, it forms for a few miles the northern boundary of Coorg and joins the Kávéri in the Yedatore taluk of Mysore near the village Tippúr. The Lakshmanatirtha with its tributaries the Kakotta and Kerehole drains nearly the whole of Kiggatnáál. It rises in the forest. Munikádn, on the plateau of the Brahmagiris, and in its descent over an almost perpendicular mountain-wall forms a celebrated cataract, which by Brahminical priestcraft has been invested with sin cleansing virtue, and is consequently visited at the Irpu játre by thousands of superstitious devotees. The banks of this river like those of the Kávéri are of clay or mould, steep, with a sandy bottom and shaded by dense forest or bamboo clumps.

Lakes, Tanks, Wells.—Throughout Coorg there is not a lake or tank of any size worth mentioning. In Kiggatnáál only there are a few natural reservoirs, called Kolli, enclosed by a belt of small trees and containing water all the year round. A tank 3 miles north of Somawarpet is notable for its picturesque rock scenery and the legend connected with it, which does not however accord with the inscription written upon a stone on the western outlet of the tank. The writing runs thus: "The King Andany has ordered this tank to be built on Tuesday the tenth day of the month of Phál-

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● 993 guna in the year Pārthiva. This was written by Venkadasya Mallia Bomarsia at the time of Basawalinga Déva Rāja Vodea."

[982] The legend is shortly this: "A merchant Malla Shetty of Yelusavirashime vowed to build this tank. When it was finished, there was no water forthcoming. Animal sacrifices were suggested by the tank diggers and offered, but in vain. In this distress the goddess Ganga appeared and demanded the little finger of the Shetti. Unwilling to make this sacrifice, he offered the life of Akkony, his daughter-in-law instead, whose husband was away on a journey. Akkony agreed, took an affectionate leave of her child and parents, who were ignorant of her intentions, and amidst great solemnities she stepped into the tank, when Ganga made her appearance in rushing water. Akkony's parents, hearing of the impending sacrifice, hastened to rescue their daughter, but she refused to leave the tank, uttered a curse upon her father and mother-in-law and disappeared in the rising water. She then appeared in a dream to her husband, who speedily returned home, and, on hearing what had happened, killed his parents, and with his child in his arms rushed to the tank and in despair threw himself into it, when both were graciously received by Ganga."

312 Besides the small public tanks, there are only private wells, that yield, if dug deep enough, everywhere sweet and clear water; but it appears, that the natives of Coorg do not bestow enough attention on the great blessing of wholesome water, and are often satisfied with the muddy contents of a hole, carelessly dug by the side of their paddy-fields, though from their own experience they assert, that most of their diseases are owing to the bad quality of their drinking water.

137 *Forests and their general flora and fauna.*—In Coorg extensive forests clothe every mountain range almost up to the summit and bamboo jungles, cover the more level eastern districts,